

FISHHUT, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

January 1 - April 30, 1957

REFUGE PERSONNEL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Charlo, Montana

FISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
Narrative Report
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>GENERAL</u> - - - - -	1
WEATHER CONDITONS - - - - -	1
WATER CONDITONS - - - - -	1
<u>OTHER ITEMS</u> - - - - -	2
<u>SIGNATURE</u> - - - - -	3

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I. GENERAL

Only one trip was made to these three areas during the past four months. This was during the third week in April. The weather was dry and from all appearances very little precipitation has fallen on any of these refuges during the winter months. A flight in a helicopter was made over all three areas and an attempt was made to obtain useful information regarding the wildlife present. At Benton Lake no birds or other forms of wildlife was observed. The lake bed was so dry that the pilot landed the helicopter in the middle of the refuge and we got out to observe the cracks in the earth caused by the dearth of moisture. Antelope and white-tailed deer were observed in the very near environs of both Fishkun and Willow Creek, but none were seen on the refuge proper at either place. Waterfowl were observed and estimated on both Fishkun and Willow Creek.

- A. Weather Conditions. The following table will give an idea as to general weather conditions experienced in the vicinity of these three refuges for the past four months. This data was obtained from the official weather bureau station at Choteau, Montana.

1957	Snowfall	Precipitation	Max. Temp.	Min. Temp.
January	12.5"	.34	50	-37
February	9.3"	.30	59	-20
March	3.0"	.21	61	-2
April	4.0"	.59	79	14
Total	28.8"	1.44	79	-37

- B. Water Conditions. As was mentioned in the opening paragraph the water conditions for this entire area has been rather poor. As far as waterfowl are concerned there is ample water in both Fishkun and Willow Creek reservoirs for their needs. On Benton Lake the only water which has ever been available to waterfowl during any portion of this period was a small amount in the ditch near the extreme western end of the refuge. This was the result of melting snow and a very small amount of runoff. This moisture lasted for only a short

time. There are two water holes for stock which have water in them, but no birds were observed on either of these two areas.

The following tables will give a general idea as to water conditions at Pishkun and Willow Creek reservoirs.

PISHKUN

End of:	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	Mean
January	4360.3	4360.0	4362.5	4363.2	4361.1	4365.4	4362.1
February	4359.9	4360.0	4362.5	4363.1	4360.7	4365.2	4361.9
March	4359.9	4359.7	4362.0	4363.0	4360.7	4365.0	4361.5
April	4361.9	4365.4	4362.5	4363.0	4362.6	4365.3	4363.5
Crest of Spillway		4374.0'		Bottom of Outlet		4342.0'	

WILLOW CREEK

End of:	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	Mean
January	4132.5	4136.0	4136.2	4137.1	4132.7	4135.4	4135.3
February	4135.6	4136.0	4136.5	4137.8	4132.9	4136.0	4136.1
March	4136.0	4139.1	4137.0	4138.2	4134.0	4137.1	4136.9
April	4136.4	4139.1	4137.5	4138.6	4139.1	4138.1	4138.2
Crest of Spillway		4142.0'		Bottom of Outlet		4085.0'	

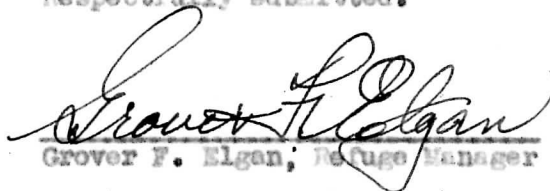
On April 19 a serial census of all three refuges was made and a number of birds were observed on both Pishkun and Willow Creek refuges. None were seen on Benton Lake. Canada geese were observed on both reservoirs and they all appeared to be paired off and started nesting. They all appeared to have well defined territories where they were holding. No nests were actually seen from the air. On Willow Creek there were approximately 20 pairs of geese, 3800 Coots, and 2000 ducks observed. The ducks were mostly Mallards with a number of Baldpates, Pintails, Shovellers, and Blue-winged Teal also noted. On Pishkun approximately 15 pairs of geese were seen as well as 1200 ducks, mostly Mallards with a few Pintails and Baldpates also present, and approximately 500 gulls.

OTHER ITEMS

Hopes are high that some development will be accomplished on Benton Lake this coming Fiscal year. Rumors are flying thick and fast around Cascade county regarding the possibilities of Congress appropriating some money to start this project moving. No definite word has been received as to the substantiation of any

of these rumors, but it is sincerely hoped by everyone concerned that they are true. Many people feel that if this area were fully developed it would be the best waterfowl refuge in the state and possibly in this section of the United States.

Respectfully submitted.


Grover F. Elgan, Refuge Manager

May 7, 1957

Approved: _____ Date: _____
John K. Schwartz, Refuge Manager

Approved: _____ Date: _____
Regional Director
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region One, Portland, Oregon